

Study on the

Academic, Economic and Professional

Situations of Psychology Doctoral Students:

Working Towards Internship Compensation!

2nd Report





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Adopted by the FIDEP Executive Council on March 1, 2013

Fédération Interuniversitaire des Doctorants en Psychologie:

The Fédération Interuniversitaire des Doctorants en Psychologie (FIDEP) is an inter-university network of Psychology doctoral students.

The FIDEP's goals consist of promoting, developing and protecting the Province of Quebec's Psychology doctoral students' material, professional, cultural, pedagogical and social interests.

Université Laval

Université de Montréal

Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

Université du Québec à Montréal

Université de Sherbrooke

We are proud to reveal new results from the most important survey carried out by the FIDEP. Our Federation is determined to report on Psychology doctoral students' current situations, from academic and economic fronts to their professional future. We are particularly concerned about the problems unpaid interns encounter and the heavy debt level they have to face during their first years as psychologists.

Rana Sioufi

FIDEP President

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Background and Goals

Background

Since its inception, the FIDEP's goal has been to obtain fair and equitable compensation for interns in psychology. A component of this goal is to gather information about the life conditions of psychology graduate students and interns. Ever since its implementation, the FIDEP has received a considerable amount of support from both university and professional sectors, yet has not received any recognition for the value of the services provided by interns in psychology. The internship in psychology is an entire year of full-time (1,600 hours) **unpaid** work that doctoral students have to complete towards the end of their doctoral studies.

Goals

This analysis arises out of the report published in March 2012. It is based on the same data from the survey conducted in February 2012, but also takes into account some information that had not yet been analyzed as well as some specifications about existing published results.

The survey's goal was to report on psychology doctoral students' academic, economic and professional situations so the FIDEP could better support its claims in favour of fair and equitable internship compensation in Quebec's public network (health and education; referred to as "public network" in this report). The secondary goal is to identify the beneficial effects that paid internships would have on labour's attraction and retention in the psychology sector within the public network.

Methodology

This study was conducted on the Internet from **February 6 to 17, 2012** among **608 psychology doctoral students** from all ten universities in Quebec offering graduate programs recognized by the Ordre des psychologues du Québec: Université de Montréal (UdeM), Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), McGill University, Concordia University, Université de Sherbrooke (UdeS), Université de Sherbrooke - campus Longueuil, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR), Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC), Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO), and Université Laval.

The respondents had access to the study's questionnaire in the language of their choice, either French or English.

A random sample of this size has **an error margin of $\pm 3.5\%$ 19 times on 20.**

The various doctoral programs are identified under the following acronyms:

Clinical psychology	PsyD
Research and clinical	PhD-RI
Research	PhD-Rech
Community psychology	PhD-Comm

Summary of the 1st Report Published in March 2012

Context:

The first report resulting from the survey was published as part of the steps undertaken by the MSSS to address the psychologist shortage issue in the public health network.

Main conclusions:

Interns are not compensated in exchange for the professional services they provide in the public network. Research shows that 75% of them have a job while studying full time.

Paid internships and intern work recognition would encourage doctoral students to choose the public network as an employer. For instance, a scholarship during the internship with the condition that the intern remains working in the public network for a few years would motivate interns to continue working there.

Internship compensation should consist of at least \$20,000.

Wage conditions currently offered within the public network are the main barriers causing future psychologists to look for work elsewhere. Results demonstrate that 41% of them do NOT plan on working in the public network.

Psychology doctoral students' average debt expectation by the end of their studies is at \$21,023.

Would you be interested in getting more detailed information about this first report? You can download it by visiting www.fidep.org and clicking on the "Documents" tab.

Highlights of this Report

Over 40% of doctoral students currently completing an internship consider their economic situation difficult or extremely difficult.

There are more interns than doctoral students at another stage in their studies who consider their economical situation unstable. The internship seems to be a particularly difficult moment financially for doctoral students.

Half of interns have to rely on student financial assistance programs from the Government of Quebec.

Half of interns are unable to meet their basic needs without help from the government.

There seems to be more doctoral students with paid internships¹ who consider their economic situation good, compared to those with unpaid internships.

A large number of those doing unpaid internships find themselves in difficult financial situations (40.7%). Internship compensation, even symbolic, could therefore make a difference.

The more the debt level expected at the end of studies is high, the more doctoral students believe it will result in prolonged studies.

The more doctoral students have debt, the more they are at risk of seeing their entry on the job market postponed.

¹ Please note that a minority of internship workplaces took the personal initiative to offer a symbolic compensation to interns, usually between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

The more their financial situation is difficult, the less doctoral students aspire to work within Quebec's public network after graduating.

If doctoral students' economic situation is unstable, debt becomes more prominently a reason not to work in the public network. These results show that improving psychology doctoral students' financial situation could have an impact on the number of psychologists willing to work within the public network.

The public network's current unpaid internships show that the government does not recognize doctoral students' work at its fair value and places them in a difficult economic situation.

These conditions cause stress and frustration, as stated by respondents, which affects interns' quality of services.

In other words, intern compensation would help:

Increase interns' quality of life for them to be able to completely focus on their internship and offer better service.

Reduce student debt and consequently increase the chance of having doctoral students looking for work in the public network after graduating.

Limit the length of studies. Therefore, psychologists' entry into the job market would be fostered and the tuition cost for studies in psychology would be reduced.

Recognize at its fair value interns' work and the profession of psychology in Quebec's public network, making this work environment more attracting and gratifying for new graduates.

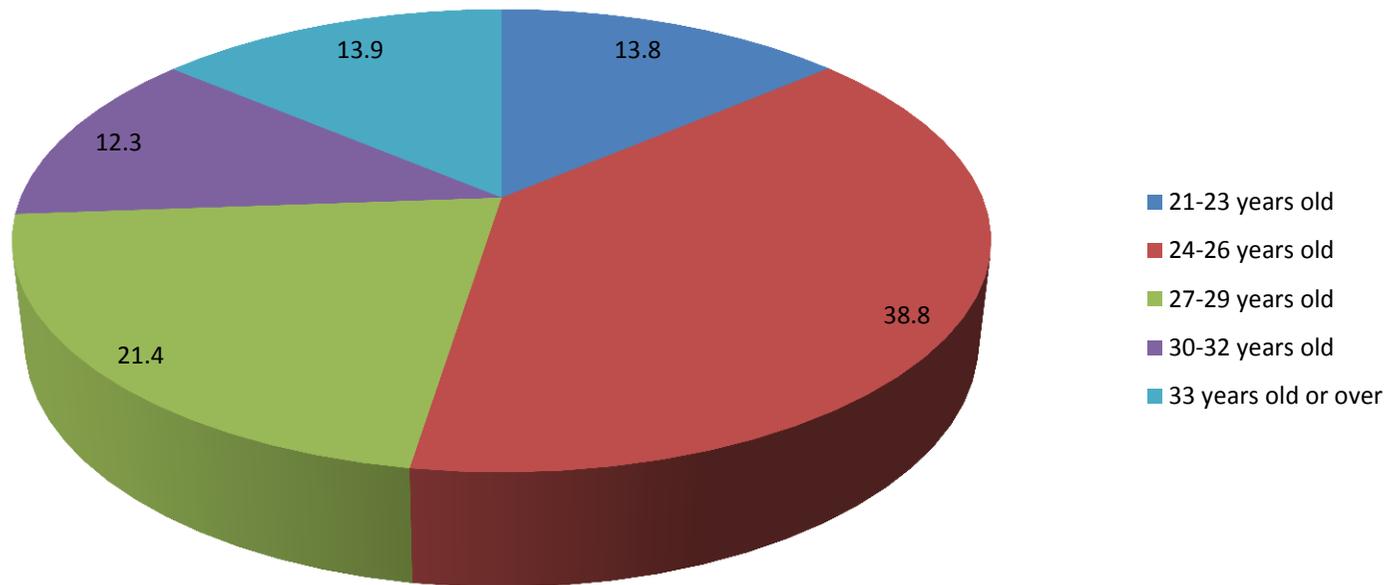
Doctoral Students' Academic Situation

Doctoral students' average age is 27.7 years old.

This study shows that 82.7% of doctoral students are women. The median age is 26 years old. This means that half of doctoral students are 26 years of age or older.

Psychology doctoral students are therefore adults who are unable to enter into the job market because they are studying full time, 12 months a year, over the entire period of their doctoral studies (4.8 years on average).

Age (in Percentage; N = 608)



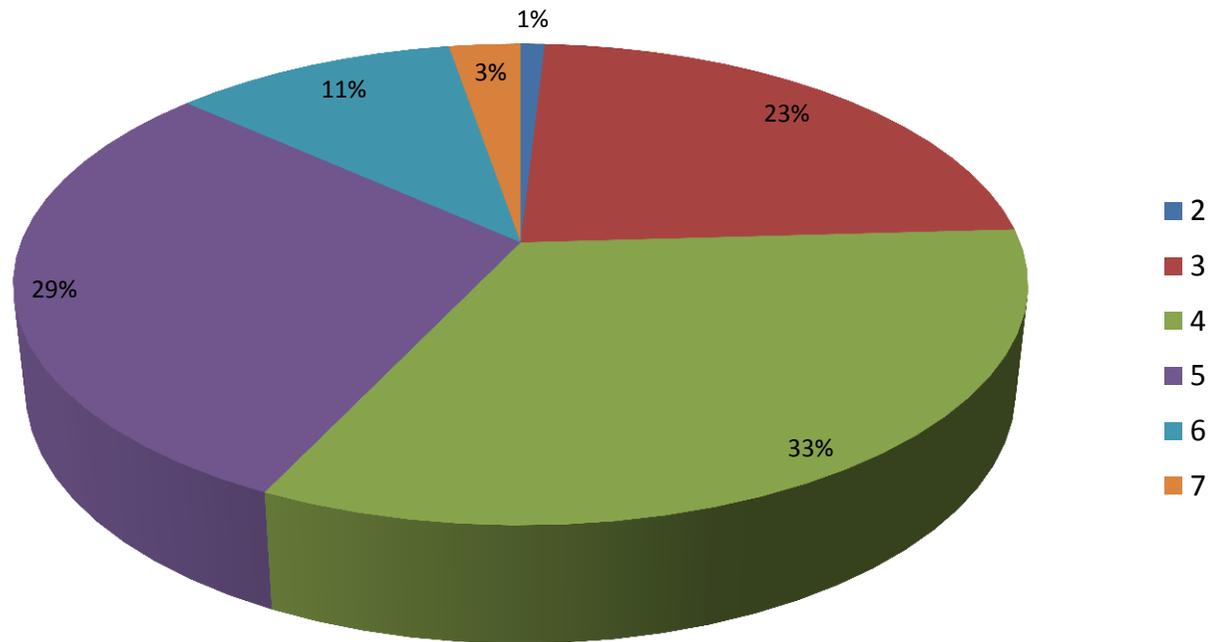
The majority of students do their internship during their 4th or 5th year of their doctoral studies.

Considering the three years of undergraduate studies compulsory for admission to the doctoral program, students do their internship at their 7th or 8th years of university on average. Research shows

that 33% of doctoral students complete their internship during their 4th year of doctoral studies and that 29% complete it during their 5th year, making it a total of 62% of doctoral students.

Interns in psychology could have already entered the job market for a while, but were unable to due to the length of their training.

Year of Study at the Doctoral Level for Students Currently Doing Their Internship (in Percentage; N = 112)

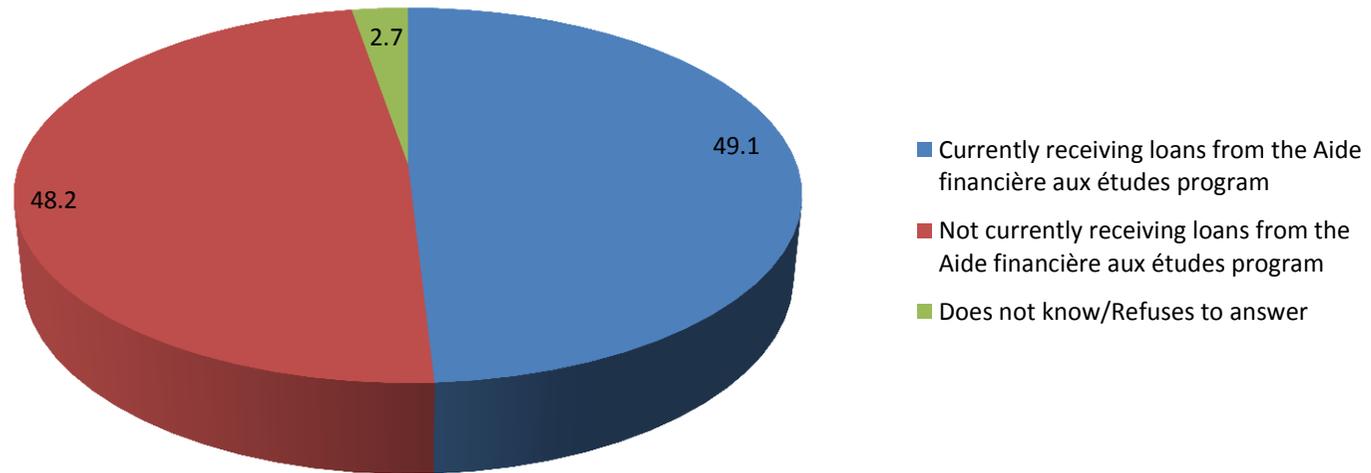


Doctoral Students' Economic Situation

Half of interns have to resort to the Aide financière aux études program from the Government of Quebec.

Half of doctoral students currently completing their internship are unable to meet their basic needs without help from the government.

Doctoral Students Receiving Loans from the Government of Quebec's Aide financière aux études Program During Their Internship (in Percentage; N = 112)

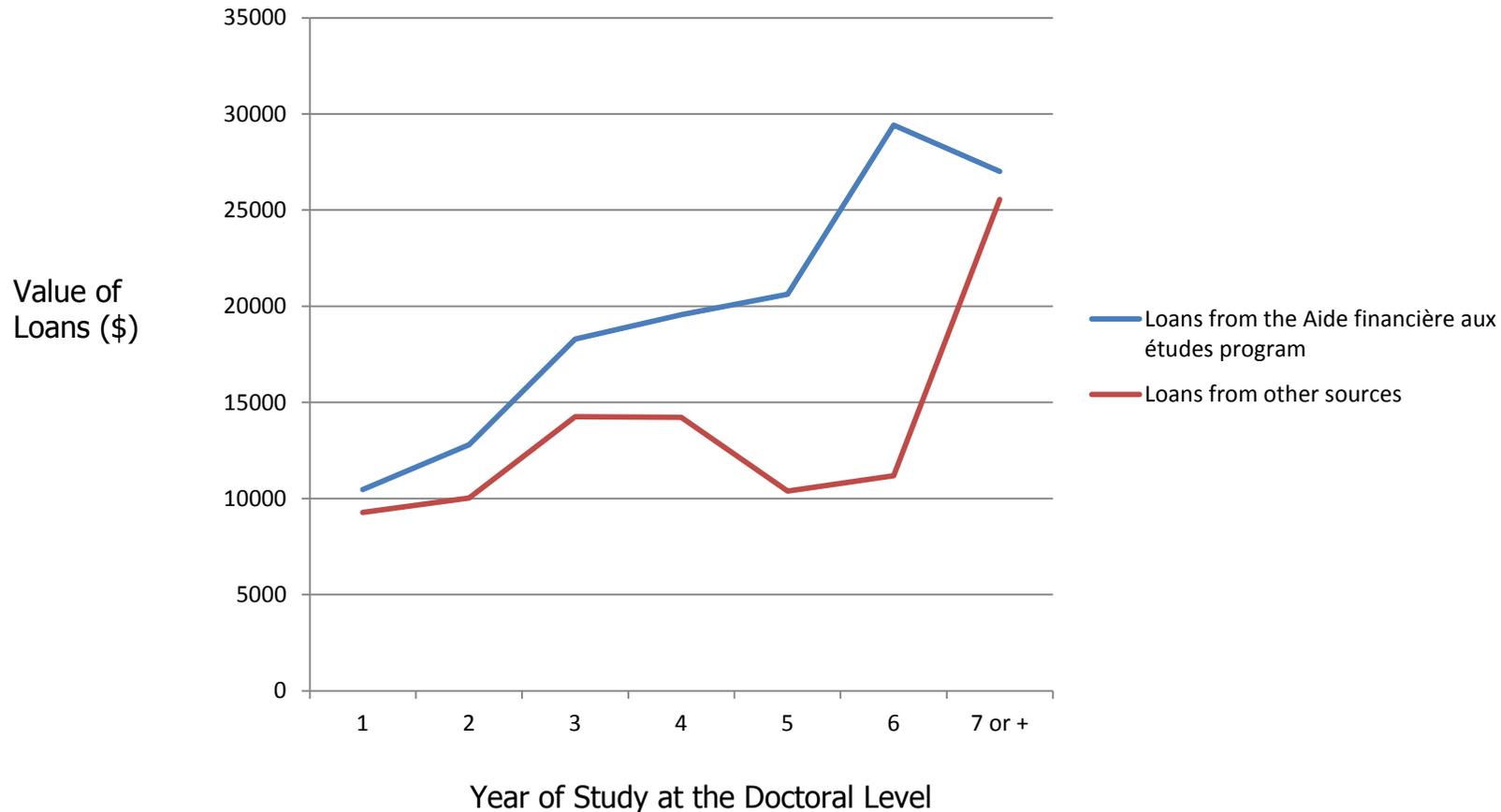


The more doctoral students move forward in their studies, the higher their student debt becomes.

Debt is a very common reality in the lives of psychology doctoral students. During the very first year of their doctoral studies, students face on

average a \$10,000 debt owed to the Aide financière aux études program and/or \$10,000 debt owed to another source (financial institution, family, etc.). At their 5th year of doctoral studies, their accumulated loans from the Aide financière aux études program will have doubled. At their 6th year, they will have tripled.

Debt According to Year of Study at the Doctoral Level (Noncumulative; N = 608)



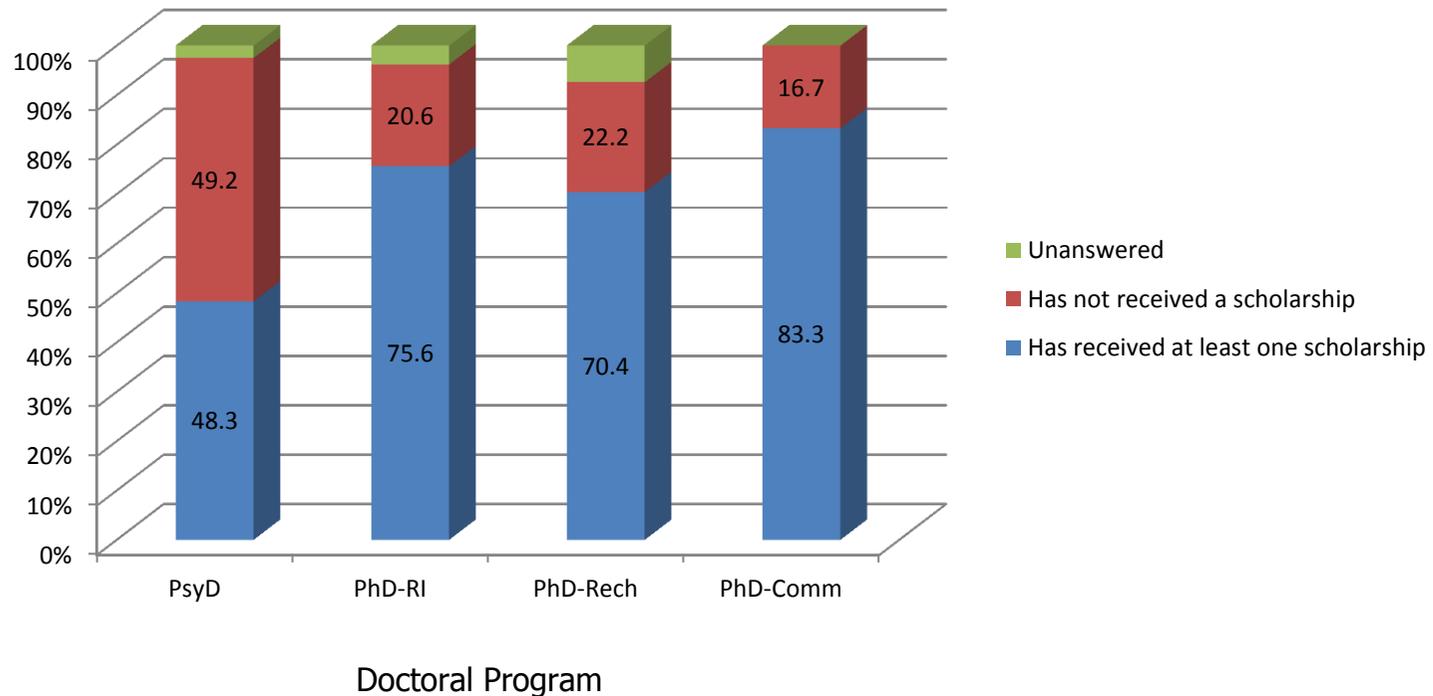
In terms of compensation amount allocated through scholarships, many inequalities can be found between doctoral programs.

Doctoral students in the clinical program (Psy.D.) receive less merit scholarships than their fellow colleagues and, when they do get compensated, the amounts are much lower.

Students of profiles with a research component are more likely to receive at least one merit scholarship during their studies (particularly from a granting agency, their research director or their university).

Therefore, while the clinical program allows quicker access to the job market, programs with a research component seem to be better rewarded.

Doctoral Students Who Have Received or Are Receiving Scholarships, Based on Their Program (in Cumulative Percentage; N = 608)



While the average amount received from scholarships is a considerable amount, the medians consist of much inferior numbers.

The scholarship average received from the government’s Aide financière aux études program (AFE) is at \$20,700. However, half of doctoral students who have access to these scholarships receive \$9,000 or less. In regards to scholarships from other sources, while the average is \$40,124,

half of scholarship students receive \$23,000 or less over the course of their studies.

In other words, some doctoral students receive distinctly more scholarships, which falsely inflates the average of scholarships received considering that the majority of scholarship students do not receive such a high amount. The received loans’ average and median are for their part a lot closer.

Average and Median of Scholarships and Loans Received by Psychology Doctoral Students (Aide financière aux études: N = 200; Other Scholarship Sources: N = 283)

	Scholarships Received from the AFE	Scholarships Received from Other Sources
Average	20,700	40,124
Median	9,000	23,000

Average and Median of Scholarships and Loans Received by Psychology Doctoral Students (Aide financière aux études: N = 360; Other Loan Sources: N = 266)

	Loans Received from the AFE	Loans Received from Other Sources
Average	17,002	12,600
Median	14,065	10,000

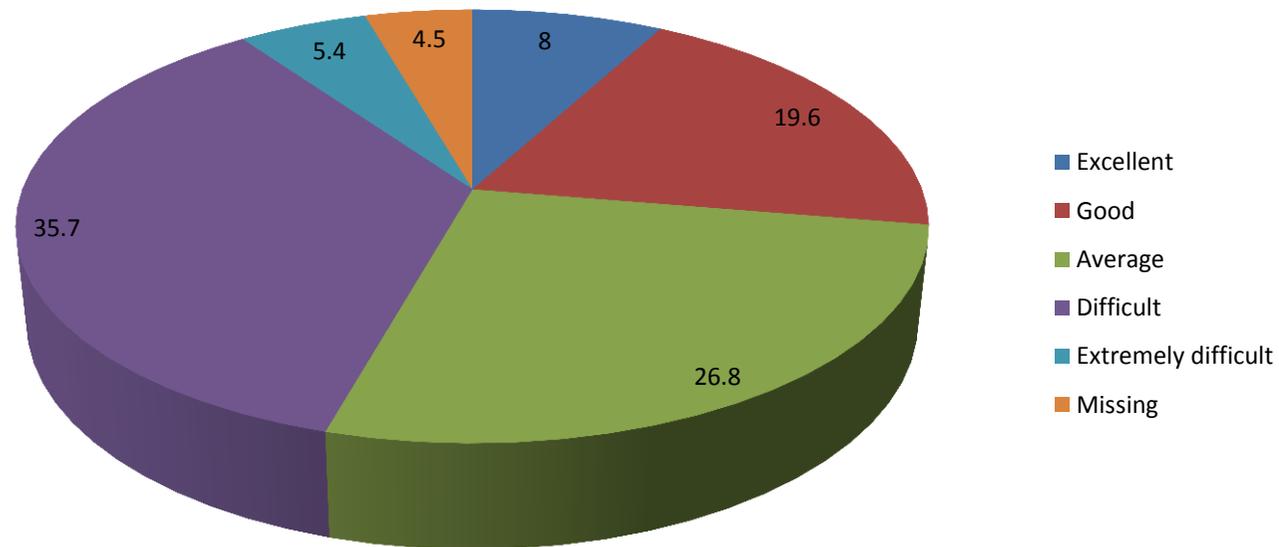
More than a third of doctoral students currently completing their internship consider their economic situation difficult.

Including doctoral students who find their economic situation difficult and extremely difficult, we can come to the conclusion that those who

consider themselves in unstable situations represent 41.1%.

There are therefore more interns than psychology doctoral students at another stage in their studies who consider their economic situation unstable. The internship seems to be a particularly difficult period financially for doctoral students.

Subjective Intern Economic Situation (in Percentage; N = 112)

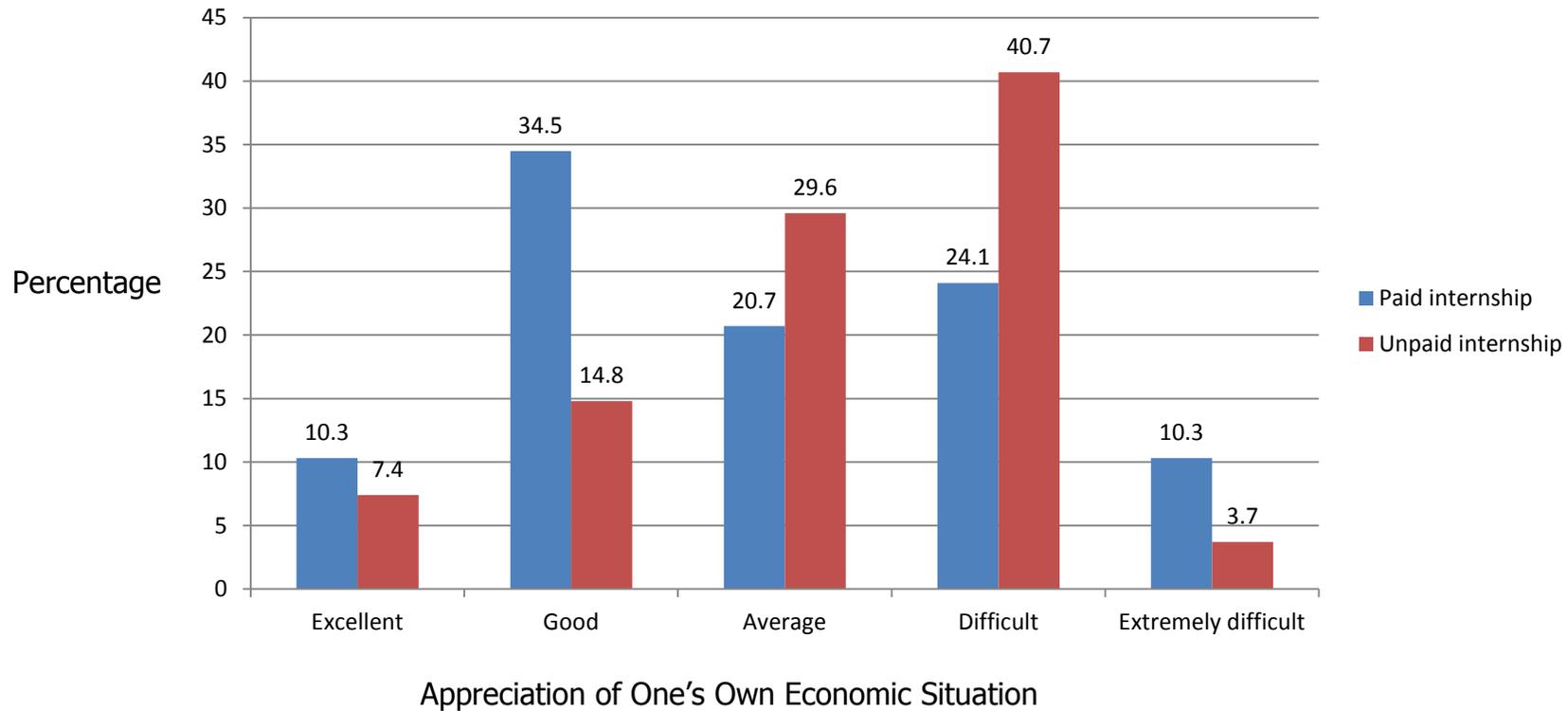


More doctoral students who are completing a paid internship seem to consider their economic situation good, compared to those doing an unpaid internship.

The 1st report revealed that 25.9% of interns were compensated (such as doctoral students in industrial/organizational psychology) with a symbolic amount of \$10,592.

More than a third of doctoral students whose internship was compensated stated being in a good financial situation, and 20% of them considered being in an average situation. Those whose internship was not paid largely find themselves in a difficult financial situation (40.7%). Compared to paid interns, more of them qualify their financial situation as average.

Interns' Economic Situation Appreciation Based on Whether or Not Their Internship Was Compensated (in Percentage; N = 112)



Doctoral Students' Professional Situation

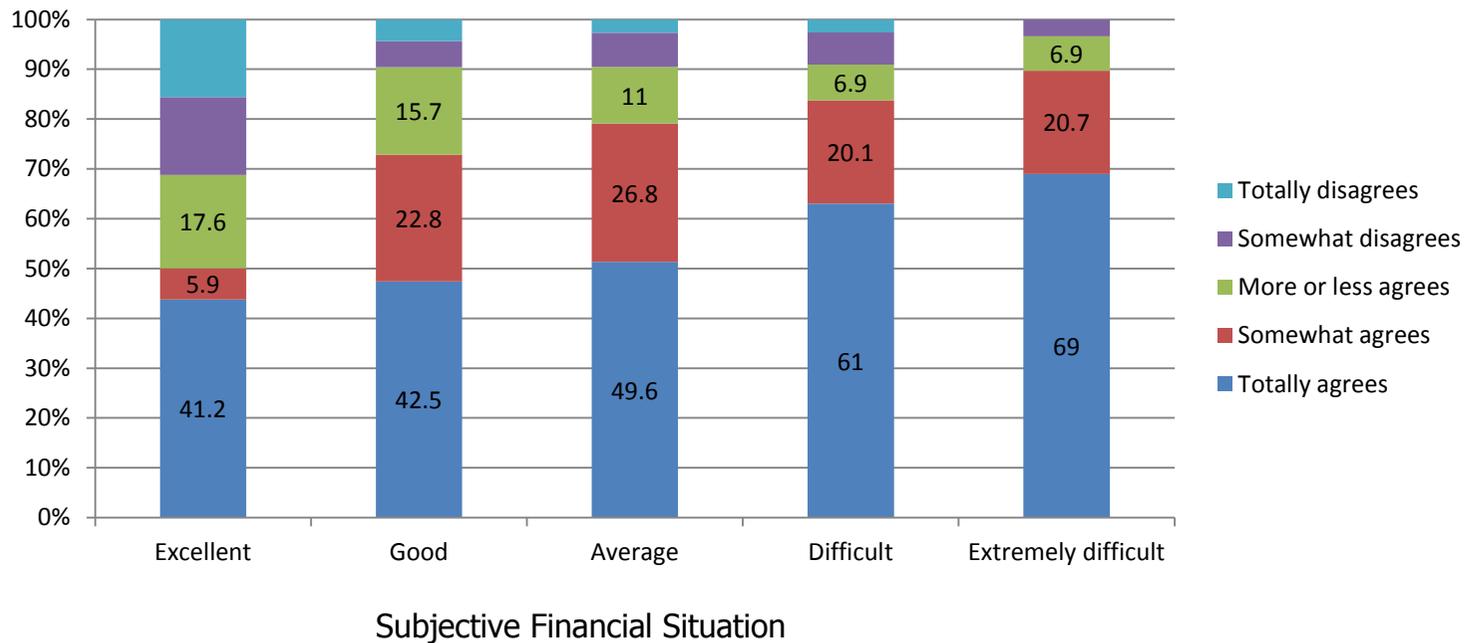
The more the doctoral students are faced with a difficult financial situation, the more their internship choice is based on the fact that it is compensated.

For the great majority of doctoral students in unstable financial situations, their internship choice is influenced by the compensation offered. These students are then penalized because, as opposed to

those whose financial situation is better, they will base their internship choice more on the possibility of compensation than on their interest or the learning possibilities at the internship's workplace.

Despite all this, over 40% of doctoral students who find themselves in an excellent or good financial situation are influenced by the internship's compensation.

Doctoral Students Who Agree/Disagree that Their Internship Choice Was Influenced by Its Compensation (in Cumulative Percentage; N = 608)



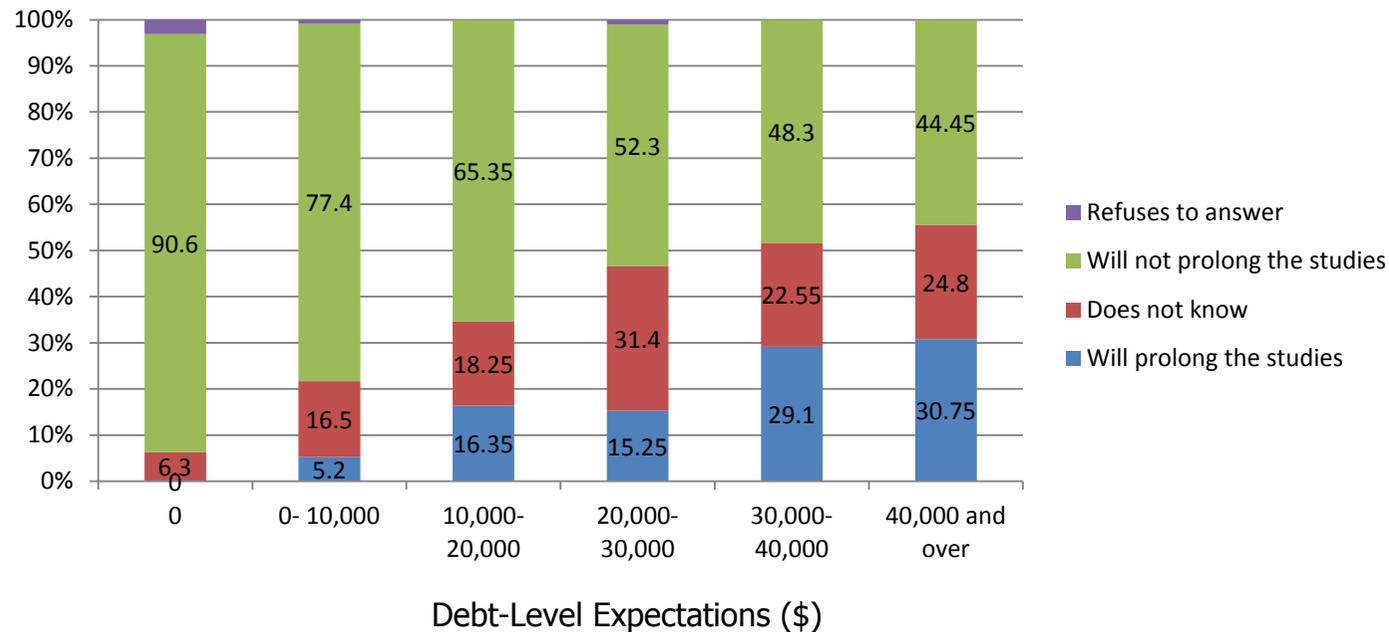
The more the debt level expected at the end of studies is high, the more doctoral students believe it will prolong their studies.

With \$10,000 to \$20,000 of debt at the end of their studies, 15% of doctoral students believe that their debt level will prolong their studies and 18% are unable to tell. With \$30,000 to \$40,000 of debt expected at the end of their studies, 30% of them (almost double) believe their debt level will prolong their studies and 22% are unable to tell.

Also, the further they get in their doctoral studies, the more doctoral students largely believe (up to 40% of those at their 6th year or more) that their debt level will prolong their studies.

A debt over \$30,000 would be a limit not to be crossed in order to guarantee a quick entry of students in the job market.

Doctoral Students Who Believe Their Debt Will Prolong Their Studies, According to Their Debt-Level Expectations at the End of Their Doctoral Studies (in Cumulative Percentage; N = 608)

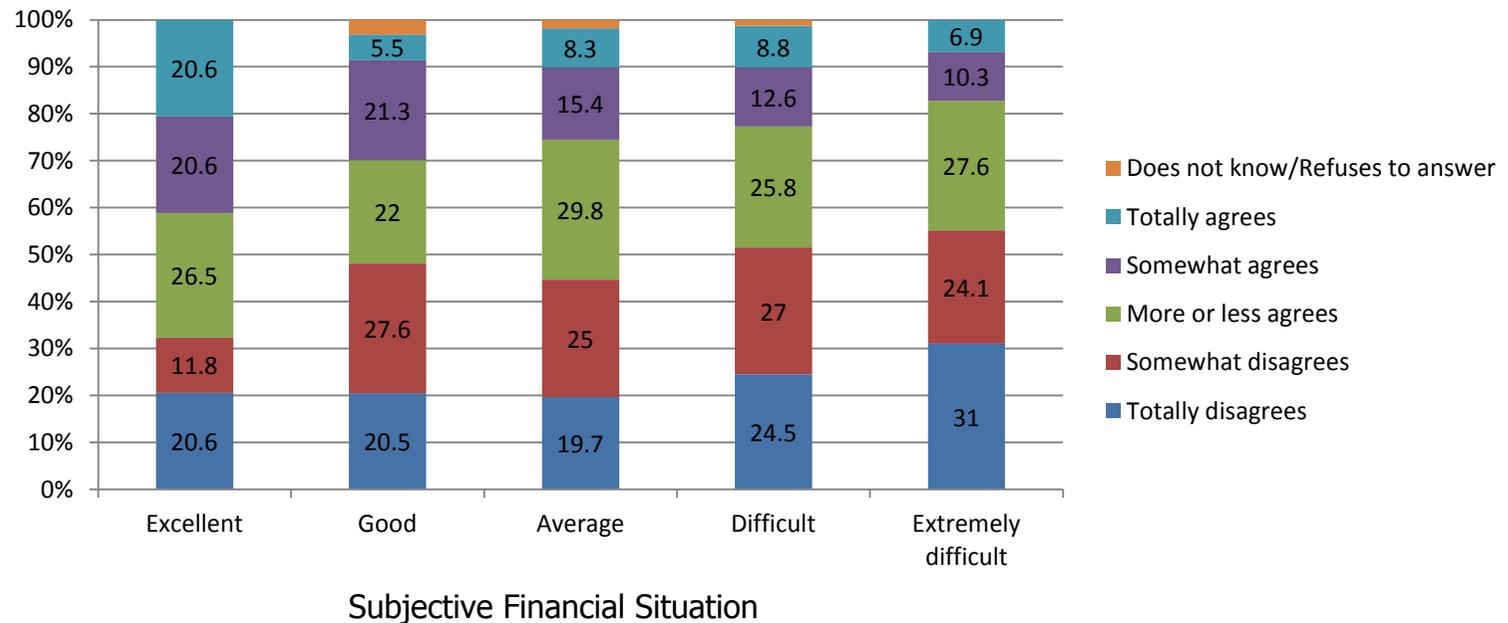


The more their financial situation is difficult, the less doctoral students wish to work in Quebec’s public network after graduation.

Around 40% of doctoral students whose financial situation is excellent want to work (totally/somewhat agrees) within the public network after graduation. This percentage is reduced to 20% for students with a difficult/extremely difficult financial situation.

With the exception of students who have an excellent financial situation, the percentage of doctoral students who disagree (totally/somewhat) with wanting to work in the public network varies between 45% and 55%. This indicates that doctoral students’ financial situation alone cannot be the explanation for the desire to work or not in the public network.

Doctoral Students Who Agree/Disagree Concerning the Will to Work in Quebec’s Public Network at the End of Their Studies, Based on Their Subjective Financial Situation (in Cumulative Percentage; N = 608)



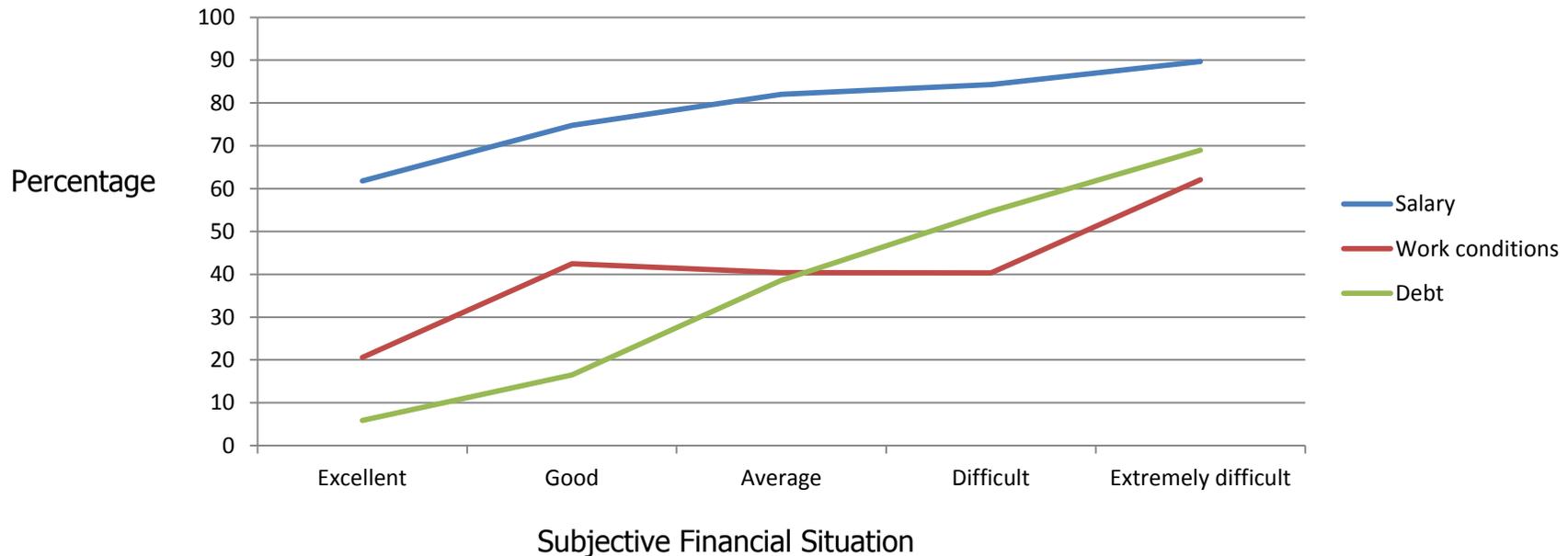
The more their economic situation is bad, the less doctoral students wish to work in the public network.

The more doctoral students' economic situation is unstable, the more their debt becomes a reason not to work in the public network, passing from 5% to 70% of them not being interested. However, salaries remain the main reason, regardless of doctoral students' financial situation. Surprisingly, the more the economic situation is difficult, the

more the public network's work conditions become a reason not to work there, passing from 20% to 60%.

These results demonstrate that improving psychology doctoral students' difficult financial situation would certainly have an impact on psychologists' desire to work in the public network. Debt would not be as high and work conditions would then be better perceived.

Doctoral Student Who Do Not Wish to Work in the Public Network for the Following Reasons, Based on Their Financial Situation (in Percentage; N = 608)



Descriptive Analysis of Comments Given

For many doctoral students, compensation is more than a salary; it's a symbolic action allowing for the recognition of:

- the profession of psychology and its essentiality within the public network;
- interns' workload;
- interns' training (doctoral-level studies), which includes previous internship experiences;
- and interns' qualification level.

Doctoral students state many advantages that their internship compensation would have:

- Allow doctoral students to meet their needs during the year of their internship;
- Reduce debt and allow for greater financial independence;
- Recognize interns' work at its fair value;
- Recognize the profession of psychology's importance in the public network;
- Increase the chances of interns continuing to work at their internship's workplace;
- Increase interns' quality of work by allowing them to focus entirely on their internship.

The current unpaid internship creates the following problems for the psychology doctoral student:

- Some doctoral students choose their internship workplace based on compensation rather than on their interests or learning possibilities;
- Some doctoral students do their internship part time to be able to have a part-time job at the same time and meet their financial needs. This situation postpones their entry into the job market;
- Some students have to make several sacrifices in order to be self-sufficient;
- Entry in the job market and career/salary advancement are postponed because the internship is not considered as a year of work;
- Doctoral students' unstable situation generates extra stress, which affects the quality of their work;
- The fact that interns' work is not recognized creates anger and disengagement towards their social mission, equally affecting the quality of their services;
- Many college and undergraduate students look for shorter training programs to become mental health workers. Consequently, they enter the job market much faster and avoid getting higher debt. In this sense, the psychology doctoral program operates a selection of the candidates based on their financial situation as opposed to their potential.

Doctoral students compare themselves to others and do not understand why they would not be compensated while others elsewhere are paid:

- Comparison with other compensated university and college programs is very common. The comparison with medicine residency is most commonly used;
- Comparison with the rest of Canada and the United States is often referred to. Internships in psychology are compensated practically everywhere in North America. Doctoral students believe that Quebec is lagging behind and that the government does not address psychologists' and psychology doctoral students' situation sufficiently.

The current situation makes doctoral students feel frustrated and unmotivated:

- Psychology doctoral students feel a great sense of injustice in regards to the current situation;
- They are under the impression that the public network uses the fact that it is mandatory to complete an internship to graduate as a way of getting free workers;
- Interns are not motivated to study for so long because the profession is not recognized by the government;
- They find it depressing not to be paid during the internship knowing that the salary in the public network after graduation is not attractive.
- These negative impressions generally do not encourage them to perform at their very best.

Respondents describe the conditions in which they live:

- With a very busy schedule, it is difficult to have a part-time job during the internship;
- At the end of their doctoral studies, interns are in their late-twenties, which means they are adults with occupations outside of university (for example, family life) and often have to postpone many life projects due to financial incapability;
- Interns often work with clients who suffer from severe mental disorders, which is emotionally demanding for any type of person intervening;
- Financial support, after so many years of university studies, is limited;
- The salary of recent graduates in psychology working in the public network is not enough to pay off all accumulated debt;
- After having devoted many years of their lives to studying full time, all the while working part time, and still being in debt despite everything, many cannot afford to work at the salary offered in the public network;
- Some respondents mentioned they did not have a difficult financial situation, but they had to work part time or even postpone their graduation to achieve this.

For doctoral students to be ready to commit to working in the public network after graduation:

- Internship compensation should be compelling or wage conditions should be better when hiring;
- If compensation were higher, more doctoral students would be ready to commit to working in the public network for a long time;
- Compensation should be given as scholarships (non-taxable). Should compensation have to be given as a salary, the amount given should be higher.

Some comments given by doctoral students against internship compensation reflect some concerns they are having:

- Two respondents believe that a paid internship could result in higher performance expectations from internship workplaces. To that effect, it is suggested to establish a list of tasks for available scholarships/positions;
- A respondent mentioned that not all workplaces will be able to offer paid internships;
- A respondent states that the problem not only resides in the compensation of internships, but also in the low salaries offered in the public network, considering the mandatory training. This salary should also be revised upwards to resolve the situation.

Conclusion

The FIDEP has been demanding fair and equitable psychology intern compensation for a long time. Research shows that 72% of them work 1,600 hours for free, while the rest of them receive on average a salary inferior to minimum wage.

Our survey shows that over 40% of interns live in a difficult or extremely difficult economic situation, but that when they receive a compensation for their internship, even if modest, more of them consider their economic situation good. Paid internships could then truly make a difference on doctoral students' quality of life during this financially difficult year in their training.

A better economic situation would be a major asset in regards to the quality of services provided by doctoral students during their internship year.

This survey also demonstrates that doctoral students' will to work or not in the public network after graduation is related to their economic situation. Compensating interns could therefore not only contribute to improving their financial situation, but also encourage more young psychologists to work in Quebec's public network.

Internship compensation has a symbolic value for doctoral students: the recognition of their work and the profession of psychology. This would allow for a more gratifying work environment and doctoral students would be more tempted to work within the public network.

Paid internships and the recognition of psychology doctoral students' value have never been so essential.